DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 119 294 EA 007 915

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TITLE Evaluation and the Organization.
PUB DATE Oct 75
NOTE 7p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Affective Objectives; Cognitive Objectives; *Evaluation; *Measurement; Organizations (Groups); *Values

ABSTRACT

Evaluation has two clear and distinct segments. Evaluation in cognition applies to the constant reevaluation of the internal processes of the organization. Evaluation is also a system of valuing those things with which the organization is primarily concerned. Therefore, the broad area of evaluation is both the self-evaluation of the processes of the organization's operation and the production and use of proper judgemental design for each task. (Author)

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EVALUATION AND THE ORGANIZATION

Joseph C. Payne

Introduction

Of all the cerebral gymnastics mankind submits to, one of the most frequent mental functions is the process of valuing. It is in some circumstances the least well done and in other circumstances the best done of all mental functioning. Everyone places value on those things that impinge upon his existence. He judges the environment around him and then acts on those judgments. Basic to the act of value setting is the corollary that all valuing, all judging is assumed to be a process without flaw. Unfortunately, all judgment contains some error.

Thus, it is essential to the discussion of the anatomy of evaluation to accept the fact that evaluation is a human act whether it be to place a value upon a person, place, thing or idea, whether it be a simple or a complex process used to arrive at a conclusion, whether it be with or without structure, biased, objective or unbiased, it is an act by a human.

Evaluation and Measurement

Evaluation is not measurement. Measurement is the result of an act which uses an instrument or process yielding a total, a sum or the answer to "how many?" Measurement is devoid of emotion, but not error, devoid of decision-making ability, but not precision. Measurement is a process utilized by the human to evaluate. The skill of being able to create the instruments of measurement allows the human to produce more valid evaluations, render more functional judgments, and thereby make more efficient and usable decisions.

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Measurement allows the human to create statistical signposts, to ease the agony of complexity. Norms evolve from measurement. Norms are capable of representing groups of numbers which are the products of measurement. Once a norm is established for a trait, characteristic, behavior or performance, a judgment is made by the human and a standard is set. Thus a standard set to be met or surpassed by a human is established by another human. Measurement is to evaluation as a norm is to a standard.

Objectives and goals are set within a given environment by humans as the projected standards to be met. Evaluation of those objectives and goals cannot be accomplished unless appropriate measurement is performed utilizing practical, goal-centered instrumentation. Feedback processes, when applied in a practical way, will first allow for appropriate goal change. Without a feedback process, an assumption is sometimes made that processes and instrumentation have been incorrectly applied.

Evaluation and the Cognitive and Affective Domains of Objectives

Evaluation, as a process, falls logically and appropriately in the mental functional area of cognition. It is defined as one of the six basic areas of cognition which also include knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, and synthesis. Evaluation as a part of the cognitive domain refers mainly to application of an individual evaluative process applied by the individual. Self-evaluation is a necessary part of the cognitive domain of every functional individual, organization, institution or network.

Evaluation when viewed as a part of the affective domain, moves into the human process of valuing, i.e., placing a value upon some thing. As the creation of purpose, objectives, strategies, processes, procedures, and conclusions unfolds, the logical conclusion is reached that without making some judgment--

forming some notion of how well something worked, how successful the process was, how close one attained the stated goal--the whole procedure has gone for naught.

Thus, evaluation in the affective domain of value setting and the process of value formulation is that system which one normally applies to any set of behaviors, other than to one's self.

In the next section, it will be evident that evaluation has two clear and distinct segments. Evaluation in cognition applies to the constant re-evaluation of the internal processes of the organization. Evaluation is also a system of valuing those things with which the organization is primarily concerned. Therefore, the broad area of evaluation is both the self-evaluation of the processes of the organization's operation and the production and use of proper judgmental design for each task. The question which can now be answered is, "Did the distribution of resources of the organization to this particular project accomplish what the original purpose of the project stated?"

Evaluation and Organizations

The basic function of an organization is the careful distribution of resources made available as a response to predetermined objectives and goals. This distribution can be directed and limited in many ways. However, no distribution is without some influence on the lives of people within the organization. In this respect, the motivation behind the distribution of resources which serve to accomplish given objectives carries with it the basic obligation of control and accountability. Thus, the reason evaluation, subjective or objective, direct or indirect, calculatable or unobtrusive, is important is that the knowledge of the impact of distributed resources is essential to the development of accountability.

Responsibility to originate and maintain evaluation processes is not policy-oriented but is administrative-oriented. Deciding to answer the basic question of impact of resource distribution and to evaluate the functional processes of operation are self-evident practices. The administrative decision can be assumed to produce no conflict with any policy formulated by the governing body of the organization.

Evaluation as a functional part of the formulation of a project carries with it the aura of fiscal responsibility. Each project, as a matter of course, should have an evaluation component. It must be rocognized that the characteristics of the project's objectives will determine the kind and form of evaluation as well as the evolution of the logical instrumentation necessary to serve the evaluation process. Efforts on the part of any organization to provide leverage resources to create a multiplier effect will elicit the type of project somewhat out of the traditional operational mode. This characteristic alone will obviously tax the powers of project directors to provide an effective and functional evaluation component. Correspondingly, those project officials charged with the responsibility of investigating, monitoring, and generally developing projects will also be taxed to determine the appropriateness of the evaluation component. In this regard, it becomes necessary for every professional to have a basic knowledge of the principles of measurement. Since it is literally impossible for all project professionals to develop a degree of evaluation skill and knowledge necessary to properly serve every project, then the professional must develop the ability to determine when the skills of an outside evaluation consultant are required. It does not matter if the evaluation consultant functions as a regular part of the organization staff or is only an occasional employee. Only the volume of need will determine this. It is only necessary to recognize that there will be eventual

need for expert, trained service to the efficacy of the evaluation component in any given project. The monitoring function of evaluation does not need expert consultancy, for if the evaluation design is correctly constructed at the outset, periodic reports and final statements will be within the understanding of any appropriate professional.

Self-evaluation, however, as a clear and distinct part of the management function, is a continuous process not varied by the volume of the number of projects or degrees of sophistication of organization aims.

In this regard, whatever administrative unit accepts responsibility for the broad area of staff training, development and general upgrading will also be responsible for organization self-evaluation. Fundamentally, this part of the cognitive awareness by an organization in an environment of changing values, purposes, and goals has both an atomic and global aspect. Administrative management must, at intervals, appropriate to the overall function, ask itself how well it is achieving its basic goals. In addition, it must also require each functioning part of the total unit to maintain continuous self-evaluative dialogue so as to sharpen, improve, and make more efficient individual, day-to-day operations. One clear and distinct manifestation of this second aspect is that of management by objectives. Each professional can by this method provide a voluntary and constant self-evaluation stance. In proper perspective, management of the individual's self-described objectives is non-threatening and allows for professional improvement and rapid, cohesive staff maturity.

All in all, the internal evaluation function with its continuous operational format cannot be farmed out to a consulting firm. Only inventories of basic organizational practices need the use of outside consulting professionals.

Conclusion

Evaluation, without appropriate measurement or norming for objective setting is either prejudicial or nonfunctional. Generally, evaluation takes two forms. One, the evaluation component of each project is in the heart of the service function of an organization to promote processes for accurate and appropriate accountability. Two, the sensitive and frequently humanistic evaluation function of self-appraisal which is a part of the management process can lead only to a positive and professionally healthy staff operation. Parenthetically, the two evaluation functions described should not and cannot be performed within the same milieu. Just as self-evaluation is a part of the cognitive function, evaluation as a value-setting process must remain exclusively in the affective domain.

Attainment of the necessary function called evaluation is beset by fears and anxieties created by the past and by the rapidity with which change takes place today. However, once attained, professional pride mounts, morale bubbles at its highest level and the effectiveness of a process reaches the apex of clear and distinct impact upon the societal needs and the increasingly complex cultures of the day. No human can resist asking and trying to answer the questions, "Is what is being done effective" and "Am I effective in getting it done?"

October, 1975
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